



Transition - Remembering “Doc” Fritchey of Trout Unlimited – 1907-2006

“Doc” Fritchey, as he was known to many, passed away on August 18 as a result of complications after experiencing a fall in June which fractured his hip.

Up to that time he was still fishing on an almost weekly basis in spite of mobility problems which had plagued him since an early age, but had intensified after suffering a stroke several years ago.

In his earlier years, Doc was a physician practicing dermatology, the son of a physician who also served three terms as mayor of Harrisburg.

Doc came into prominence in the 1970s as the leader of a long drawn-out battle to save Stony Valley from commercial development. He had hunted and fished in the valley since sometime in the 1920s, and could not bear to see this pristine wilderness just a few minutes north of Harrisburg destroyed by commercial interests.

What had been proposed at the time by Pennsylvania Power & Light was the damming of Stony Creek to build two reservoirs for the generation of electric power.

PP&L had arranged in 1969 to swap over 5,000 acres of land it owned along Clarks Creek in Middle Paxton Township for 1,700 acres owned by the Game Commission in Stony Valley. However, this “act of generosity” by PP&L in making more land “accessible” to local sportsmen was not viewed in the same light by those who valued the unspoiled nature of one of the largest tracts of wilderness area remaining in Pennsylvania.

Doc’s early attempts to enlist the help of various political entities to defeat the project largely fell on deaf ears. In 1970, he decided to contact Trout Unlimited for assistance, but was told that “it was probably too late to do anything” to save his beloved Stony Valley.

Undaunted, he rallied the support of about a dozen potential members and convinced TU in 1971 to charter the Dauphin Chapter.

With momentum building in the battle to “Save Stony Valley,” he was successful in recruiting more than 50 conservation organizations to form the Stony Valley Coalition which ultimately was responsible for having Stony Creek designated as part of the PA Scenic Rivers System.

As a result of Doc’s persistence, PP&L eventually abandoned its plans, and in 1980 the Stony Valley land was donated back to the Game Commission.

Doc expressed mixed emotions over winning his hard-fought battle, feeling that all of the publicity would surely ruin forever the uniqueness of the Stony Valley wilderness.

He was quoted at the time as saying, “we had to publicize the place, then get loads of people up there, which is bad, because now you go up and see trash all over the place; but you have to put up with these things if you want to save the creek.”

It was for Doc’s selflessness, dedication and just plain hard work that the original Dauphin Chapter was renamed in his honor in the 1990s.

Doc was also a talented, self-taught artist who spent many hours painting the flora and fauna of Stony Valley. His most famous work which was created in the 1970s as a fundraiser for the Coalition is entitled, “Gems of Stony.”

The Doc Fritchey Chapter of TU is deeply indebted to “Doc” for his many contributions to local conservation efforts, and is firmly committed to preserving the legacy that he created during his time on this earth.

(Written by Bob Pennell, from Hatches, the newsletter for the Doc Fritchey Chapter of Trout Unlimited.)



Doc Fritchey (right) and son John